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Authority 969000
By [initials] Date 7/1/02

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PA/HO Department of State
E.O. 12958, as amended
June 21, 2006



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TELEGRAM

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ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 OMB-01 T-03 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-06 H-02 INR-06
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 P-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-14 USIA-12
AID-20 RSR-01 /096 W

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R: 220927Z AUG 72
FM AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9461

TEHRAN 5055

SUBJ: CONTINUING TERRORIST VIOLENCE

REF: TEHRAN 4887

SUMMARY: FOLLOWING ASSASSINATION OF GENERAL SAID TAHERI, BOMBING AND OTHER TERRORIST ACTIVITIES HAVE CONTINUED TO INCREASE. SAVAK MAINTAINING ITS POLICY OF WIDESPREAD PREVENTIVE ARRESTS AND, WHILE THIS RUNS RISK OF HEIGHTENING RESENTMENT AMONG POPULACE, OFFICIALS SEEM CONFIDENT THAT GUERRILLAS ARE ON THE RUN. WE ARE SKEPTICAL ABOUT THE OFFICIAL OPTIMISM AND FEEL THAT SANGUINE PUBLIC STATEMENTS AND THE GUERRILLA REACTION THEY USUALLY PROVOKE MAY FURTHER ERODE CREDIBILITY OF SECURITY ORGANS IN MIND OF PUBLIC. END SUMMARY

1. IN WAKE OF SMOOTHLY HANDLED ASSASSINATION AUGUST 13 OF HEAD OF PRISONS BRIGADIER GENERAL SAID TAHERI (REFTEL) WHO WAS ALSO CHIEF OF AN ANTI-GUERRILLA SUBCOMMITTEE WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR UNIVERSITY STUDENTS, FREQUENCY OF TERRORIST ACTIVITIES HAS INCREASED. RECENT CONFIRMED INCIDENTS HAVE INCLUDED A BOMB IN A TEHRAN DEPARTMENT STORE WHICH INJURED THE TERRORIST PLANTING IT, BOMB IN TEHRAN NATIONAL IRANIAN OIL COMPANY BUILDING WHICH KILLED WATCHMAN, APPREHENSION OF A TERRORIST IN SOUTH TEHRAN WHICH RESULTED IN ONE KILLED AND FIVE WOUNDED, AND SHOOTING TO DEATH OF THREE POLICEMEN IN A SMALL BAZAAR IN SOUTH TEHRAN. NUMEROUS OTHER BOMBINGS AND SHOOTINGS RUMORED BUT NOT VERIFIED BY EMBASSY OR CONFIRMED BY GOI.

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2. SAVAK AND OTHER SECURITY ORGANS ARE PROCEEDING WITH A WIDE-SPREAD AND, WE HEAR, NOT VERY WELL TARGETED ROUND-UP OF SUSPECTS, AIDED BY LISTS OF NAMES AND OTHER DOCUMENTS FOUND IN DWELLING OF A RECENTLY SLAIN TERRORIST LEADER. POLICE NETS, WHICH ARE REPORTEDLY HAULING IN THE INNOCENT WITH THE GUILTY, HAVE EXTENDED AS FAR AFIELD AS ISFAHAN WHERE A NUMBER OF SUSPECTS WERE ARRESTED TWO WEEKS AGO.

3. DESPITE INCREASING LEVEL OF GUERRILLA ACTIVITY, POLICE OFFICIALS REMAIN OPTIMISTIC. CHIEF OF NATIONAL POLICE LTG JAFFARGOLI SADRI ASSURED EMBOFF AUG. 17 THAT CURRENT FLURRY OF INCIDENTS CONSTITUTES DYING GASP OF GUERRILLAS WHO, HE CLAIMS, HAVE BEEN REDUCED BY TWO THIRDS IN PAST YEAR AND ARE FORCED TO ACT NOW TO SHOW THEY STILL EXIST. IN A MEDIA INTERVIEW PUBLISHED IN LOCAL PRESS AUG. 19, SADRI UPPED FIGURE FOR REDUCTION OF QUERRILLA FORCES TO THREE FOURTHS, PREDICTED THAT REMAINING TERRORISTS WOULD SOON BE WIPED OUT AND REITERATED STANDARD GOVERNMENT LINE THAT GUERRILLAS ARE CONFUSED MISGUIDED INDIVIDUALS OF MARXIST-LENINIST BENT BUT WITHOUT GOALS OR PROGRAM. IN DISCUSSION WITH EMBOFF SADRI ATTACHED NO PARTICULAR IMPORTANCE TO MURDER OF GENERAL TAHERI, ASSERTING THAT TERRORISTS WOULD HAVE BEEN SATISFIED WITH ANY HIGH-RANKING OFFICER AND CHOSE TAHERI ONLY BECAUSE OF ISOLATED LOCATION OF HIS HOUSE AND HIS PREFERENCE FOR LONG WALKS ALONE. SADRI ALSO DISCOUNTED POSSIBILITY THAT ASSASSINS WERE OF HIGHER CALIBER THAN RUN-OF-THE-MILL GUERRILLAS, POINTING OUT THAT SHOTS WHICH KILLED TAHERI HAD BEEN FIRED FROM 50 CENTIMETERS AND THAT "A CHILD COULD HIT A MAN FROM THAT DISTANCE."

COMMENT: WE CONSIDER IT MORE LIKELY THAT TAHERI WAS PERSONALLY TARGETED DUE TO HIS DIRECT INVOLVEMENT IN ANTI-GUERRILLA ACTIVITIES. MOREOVER, SKILLFUL MANNER IN WHICH ASSASSINATION CARRIED OUT, REQUIRING CAREFUL PLANNING AND RECONNAISSANCE AS WELL AS DEFT EXECUTION, APPEARS TO INDICATE THAT THOSE INVOLVED WERE MUCH BETTER TRAINED THAN AVERAGE TERRORISTS, SOME OF WHOM HAVE BEEN BLOWN UP BY THEIR OWN BOMBS.

IT IS POSSIBLE THAT NUMBER OF GUERRILLA INCIDENTS WILL BEGIN TO TAPER OFF, BUT WE DO NOT SHARE SADRI'S CONFIDENCE THAT HIS TACTICS AND THOSE OF SAVAK CAN COMPLETELY HALT TERRORIST ACTIVITY. IN FACT OVER REACTION AND TOO ZEALOUS A REPRESSION BY SECURITY ORGANIZATIONS SEEM AT LEAST AS LIKELY TO RECRUIT

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NEW GUERRILLAS AS TO STAMP OUT OLD ONES. IN ADDITION WISDOM SEEMS QUESTIONABLE OF SECURITY OFFICIALS' MAKING PUBLIC PRONOUNCEMENTS ABOUT BREAKUP OF GUERRILLA GROUPS AND PREDICTIONS OF THEIR DEMISE. WE RECALL THAT THE LAST SUCH ANNOUNCEMENT LAST JANUARY WAS FOLLOWED BY SERIES OF EXPLOSIONS ON US PROPERTIES AND OTHER SITES IN TEHRAN. IN OUR VIEW SUCH PUBLIC DECLARATIONS RUN RISK OF INCREASING CREDIBILITY GAP AND RESENTMENT ON PART OF PUBLIC WHO LIKELY BE INCREASINGLY APPREHENSIVE OF INDISCRIMINATE ARRESTS THAT DO NOT SEEM TO BE STAMPING OUT TERRORISTS.

THE PROGNOSTICATION THEREFORE IS FOR A CONTINUATION OF THE TERRORISM BUT, DESPITE SUCCESSFUL MURDER OF TAHERI, WE DO NOT CONCLUDE THAT GUERRILLAS WILL NOW PLACE GREATER RELIANCE ON ASSASSINATION AS A TOOL. REASON IS THAT TERRORISTS STILL LACK ENOUGH TRAINED PERSONNEL TO PULL OFF ASSASSINATIONS ON REGULAR BASIS.
FARLAND

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